

Press release – MEPs advocate reviewing EU – Turkey relations and suspending EU accession talks

Europe is not closing the door to Turkey, but recent developments prompt it to look for alternatives to Turkey's accession to the EU, said MEPs in a debate with Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn on Wednesday.

Opening the debate, European Parliament President Antonio Tajani urged Turkey to respect fundamental rights, which are the basis of Europe. He stressed that "Europe is not an Islamophobic continent and is not closing the door on the Turkish people."

Many MEPs voiced concern at the way Turkey's referendum, which backed expanding presidential powers, was conducted, calling it unfair. They said it is time to reassess EU – Turkey relations and start a new chapter.

Some MEPs could not see Turkey ever becoming a full EU member, while others still hoped that it would be enough to suspend the negotiations, leaving the possibility for Turkey to change its current course.

An expanded customs union, more trade, student exchanges, and cooperation on security and migration, were some of the ideas presented by MEPs as a new way forward. Some also advocated maintaining support for democratic forces in Turkey, as millions of Turks do want to be a part of EU.

Next steps

The European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee is set to start debating the traditional annual resolution on Turkey's progress on 2 May. The [draft resolution](#) for 2016, prepared by rapporteur Kati Piri (S&D, NL), also calls on the EU "to suspend the accession talks with Turkey if the constitutional package is implemented unchanged".

You can catch up with the debate via [Plenary on Demand](#)